

LITHS COMMEMORATE "FREEDOM OF PRESS"

The 50th anniversary of the "Freedom of the Lithuanian Word" was commemorated by the Lithuanians of the U.S. and elsewhere (except Lithuania where there is still no freedom of the word and thought). In 1864, during the Tsarist occupation, in the Russian desire to eliminate the name and memory of Lithuania, printing anything in Lithuania was banned. The name of Lithuania was scratched off and replaced with the appellation "The Western Province". The Lithuanian printed word was kept alive in the U.S., Chicago mainly, and in the East Prussian cities of Tilsit and Koenigsberg. Many Lithuanians risked their lives by smuggling in books across the border. Those caught were unceremoniously hung, their property confiscated and families exiled to Siberia. Homes and churches were often raided in search for Lithuanian books. This struggle continued until 1904.

The present Bolshevik occupation, tho it permits printing, there is still no freedom of press as only Bolshevik propaganda and perversion of truth is allowed to be printed, while deportations is even more intense than it was under the Tsarist despots. Since the 1941 occupation 350,000 Lithuanians were deported to Siberian slave-labor camps, thousands fled and thousands were slain. Other deportations were: 1,500,000 Poles, 1,000,000 Romanians, 300,000 Czechs and Slovaks, 150,000 Latvians, 100,000 Estonians and untold numbers Uniate Ukrainians.

CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIETY OF AMERICA

One of the many fraternal benefit societies organized by immigrants to the United States has recently celebrated its 100th anniversary. This society is the Czechoslovak Society of America. It was founded early in 1854 by a group of 29 Czech (at that time Bohemian) immigrants in St. Louis, Missouri and is not only the oldest organization of Americans of Czech descent, but the oldest existing fraternal benefit organization in the United States. The Jewish B'nai B'rith, although founded eleven years earlier, dropped its beneficial services more than a half century ago in order to concentrate on educational and humanitarian services.

Today there are some 200 large benefit societies in the United States, with more than 80,000 lodges and about ten million members. Among the oldest of these are the German Order of Harugari, founded in 1869; the Polish Roman Catholic Union (1873); the Lithuanian Alliance of America (1886), and the Hungarian Verhovay Fraternal Insurance Association, also founded in 1886.

The history of the Czechoslovak Society of America has been closely tied with that of all Americans of Czech descent. Its constitution and by-laws, issued in 1854, was the first Czech book published in the United States, and in 1859 its members formed the first Czech dramatic society in this country. Until fifty years ago, all its lodge meetings were conducted in Czech, but today one hundred of its lodges conduct their meetings in English.

WORLD SEPHARDI CONCLAVE

The Second Annual World Sephardic Convention was held during the first weeks of May in Jerusalem. 7000 delegates from every part of the Sephardic world, gathered. The Sephardim are descendants of the Spanish Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492 after a residence in that land since pre-Christian days. Their language is old Spanish. After the expulsion these Jews settled mostly in Moslem countries, Turkey especially, through North Africa, the Balkan lands (which were then Turkish) and eventually Holland, Denmark, South America and North America. Until 1848 the Jews of the United States were Sephardim.



VILTIS dancers Roy Hinton and Angelina Pan, made their debut also in Spanish dances at a concert in San Diego on 13 June 1954 as students of Camargo, one of the noted stars of the Carmen Amayo group. Both executed with great excellence a fast moving dance of castanet rolling, zapateados, vueltos, etc. with all the flourish and true style of professional Spanish dancers. Both dancers have appeared at the VILTIS and Statewide programs in Lithuanian, Catalan, Arab, and Mexican dances. They appeared once again in the above dance at the San Diego County Fair on 5 July. Both seem to have a native flavor for Spanish dancing. If they continue in it, great promise can be expected. (Foto by Art Noble).



HERMANS, PAGE, FARWELL, ON TO JAPAN

Michael and Mary Ann Herman, noted Eastern Folk Dance leaders; Ralph Page, the Contra Papa; and Jane Farwell, the fun loving party gal, are leaving for Japan where they will spend the month of September teaching and sight seeing. Bon Voyage and Have Fun!

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BUZZ GLASS WINS FOUNDATION REWARD

Congratulations are extended to Henry "Buzz" Glass of Oakland who won the Ford Foundation Fellowship for a year's study in Mexico of Mexican Lore. He is one who truly deserved it. His wife and children will join Buzz. Bien Hecho, Amigo.

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HILLBILLY DAY

During the third week of May there was the National Hillbilly Music Festival in Meridian, Miss. 18,000 guitar playing and ballad singing lovers crowded the huge Ray Stadium. Among them was the Democratic "President" Adlai Stevenson.

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AND SO THEY SAID "YES"

Gerald J. Kostiuik



Hutzul Musicians by S. Horodinsky.

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The most precious treasure of any nation is its unique folklore. The Ukraine is far from an exception to this general rule. The Ukrainians associate specific customs not only with outstanding events, but also with practically every day of their lives. Even the courtship of a young couple is surrounded with a precise and detailed ceremony.

When the young man decides to ask for a girl's hand in marriage, he appeals to his father to select two men who will intercede for him to the girl's parents. These men are called "starosti", match-makers. They must be close relatives of the young man's family. The entire ritual of match-making is prepared before hand. Everyone concerned with the ceremony dresses to perfection, bringing out the traditional colorful costumes worthy of such an occasion. The ritual is always held on Thursday and on Friday, the parents of both families meet and discuss the dowries. Saturday, they go to the priest, and Sunday the first ban is announced. With all the preparations complete the ritual begins.

The two match-makers approach the home of the anxious bride-to-be in caps and coats of fur, typifying trappers. One is older and for the purpose of fulfilling his task, very eloquent. His companion is a younger man but he is to be present only as a witness. They carry, concealed beneath their colorful garb, a plentiful quantity of whiskey. In their hands they bear bread, reverently, as is due the "sustainer of Life". Majestically they approach the home and with delicately carved canes, they rap three times, pausing long between each knock in token of the dignity and importance of their mission.

The first words uttered when they enter are a prayer invoking God and all his hosts to aid and to give wisdom to those present. They then make three profound bows to the father and mother who have seated themselves at the table-bare, except for a loaf of bread at its edge.

Although the lord of the house well knows who the starosti are, he asks their identity and for what purpose they have graced his presence. In answer the elder match-maker proclaims that before anything further they wish to be formally acknowledged. He presents the bread which he is carrying as a token of this acknowledgement. This bread is a sign that they have come with peaceful intentions. When the father accepts and kisses the bread he grants them all the hospitality of the house. He places the loaf next to the loaf on the table and invites them to sit down. Once this scene has been enacted, no harsh words must pass between the father and the starosti. The elder match-maker then begins to tell from where he and his companion have come and talks of other insignificant affairs. The elder starost, when finally asked, begins an allegorical narrative in rhyme describing the real purpose of their presence.

"We are trappers carrying out a request of a prince whom we met in the forest one day (the bridegroom stands and bows for it is he of whom they speak). The prince said to us 'My good young men, do me a favor; show your friendship. You see, once I saw a she-fox, or maybe a female raccoon—and possible it looked a little like a beautiful girl,—but she escaped. To eat or drink I no longer desire. My only wish is to get her. Help me! Capture her! Whatever your souls desire I will give you; ask me for anything. I will give you ten cities and a wagon-full of bread.' We trappers are in need of this, so we followed the tracks through fields as the prince implored us. We have travelled through many lands but to no avail until we fell upon the tracks in this village. This morning we followed them right to your door, and from the doorstep into your house. Now we wish to capture her. Undoubtedly our long-hunted raccoon is in your house—a very beautiful girl. Our story is at an end; grace our deed with the wreath (a symbol of the victory of the starost). Give our prince your beautiful daughter! Will you give her away, or will you wait 'til she grows older."

The young man is then formally introduced to the girl's mother and father and begins to tell then what he expects as a dowry from his parents. Finally the father turns asking the mother what she thinks his decision ought to be. But she humbly acknowledges his supremacy in the household and admits that the decision rests with him. He then turns to his daughter asking her opinion, but tradition requires that she remain silent and merely blush. Only the glow from her impatient eyes gives her unhesitating answer.

In acceptance the father says to the starosts: "We accept the holy bread; we will not refuse a good word. That you may not accuse us of holding back the girl, we shall tie the towels."

The formal acceptance of the young man is signified by the presentation of the holy bread and two towels which the girl has embroidered with the most delicate designs. If he were refused, the match-makers would receive pumpkins as a token. The towels or the pumpkins are meant to reveal to the entire village whether the young man was accepted or not.

The father then tells the betrothed girl to give the starosti the long embroidered towels. With the helpful prodding of her mother she hesitantly approaches to do so. She is shy both because this is the tradition and because she fears the towels may not be perfect. These towels are also her expression of thanks to the match-makers.